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**CEPPS/IRI Jordan Quarterly Report: January 1 – March 31 2005**  
**USAID Cooperative Agreement Number: DCG-A-00-01-00004-00**  
**Project Dates: October 1, 2004 –April 30, 2006**  
**Total Budget: \$850,000      Expenses to Date: \$172,246**  
**Project # 7092**

**I. SUMMARY**

King Abdullah has made political reform one of the cornerstones of his reign despite developments in recent months that suggest greater attention is being paid to bureaucratic efficiency and public sector reform. In early April, the government of Prime Minister Faisal al-Fayez resigned and a new Prime Minister and government were sworn in, marking the fifth government in Jordan since Abdullah assumed the throne in 1999.

The King, apparently displeased with the previous government over the slow pace of reform – particularly with regard to the awkward political party, professional association, and election laws – tasked academic Adnan Badran with forming a new cabinet. The poor handling of two international crises: the diplomatic row with Iraq over a Jordanian citizen's alleged involvement in a suicide bombing in Hillah that killed 125 people, and the rejection at last month's Arab League summit in Algiers of a Jordanian proposal for ending the Arab-Israeli conflict, also likely contributed to the reshuffle.

Of note, the new Minister of Political Development, Hisham Tal, was also named deputy Prime Minister which could indicate a possible increase in stature of that ministry vis-a-vis the Ministry of Planning in implementing political reform in the Kingdom.

While the King is under enormous pressure to balance political tensions that spill over from Iraq and the Israeli-Palestinian issue, progress on the Jordanian front would send an important message to its neighbors. To that end, IRI efforts to strengthen citizen interest and participation in the political process—and to cultivate reform-minded leadership at all levels—is imperative now more than ever.

In the second quarter of the program, IRI hired two local staff, concluding the logistical set-up of a permanent presence in Amman. IRI also completed its broad assessment of local and international organizations engaged in political development and reform work in Jordan and began implementing programmatic activities.

## **II. BACKGROUND**

With its unique geopolitical position between the Iraq theatre and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and its strategic importance as a key U.S. ally with respect to inter-regional relations, Jordan has long been considered a linchpin for stability in the Middle East. Furthermore, Jordan's moves toward political liberalization and its desire to cast itself as a regional model of liberal governance has heightened its importance and garnered even further regional and international attention.

When King Abdullah II ascended to the throne in 1999, he boldly set forth an agenda for political reform and has committed himself to ushering in a new era of broader political participation. Movement towards political reform culminated in the creation of a new portfolio in 2003, the Ministry for Political Development, whose mission is to implement King Abdullah's comprehensive program for political development. While the ministry was initially expected to issue a new political parties law conducive to greater political competition in the course of the year, it was not until March 2005 that the Ministry introduced amendments to the existing political party law of 1992. The political parties law amendments, which entitle parties to allocations from the state budget and increase the required number of founding members for legal registration from 50 to 200, along with municipality law amendments allowing for fully-elected councils and elected mayors, seem to indicate a quickening of the pace of reform within the Kingdom. To that end, in early April 2005, the government of then-Prime Minister Faisal al-Fayez resigned and King Abdullah tasked academic Adnan Badran with forming a new, more reform-minded cabinet. As in the previous government, four women are in the newest cabinet.

Increasing internal efficiency is also a stated objective of the Palace, and the cabinet reshuffles of November 2004 and April 2005 are widely seen as an effort to both streamline government bureaucracy and increase the pace of reform.

Reforms, however, have been introduced by top-down, authoritarian measures and Jordanians face a political environment with a weak parliament and limited political party activity. Further complicating the situation is the composition of a Jordanian population that is 50%-70% Palestinian, causing issues of identity to factor strongly in national politics and constraining the opportunity for open and honest political debate. In order to preserve the delicate balance of power between the Palestinians and Transjordanians, no Palestinian-based political parties have been established, and instead Palestinians have opted to join with the Islamists or opposition groups as the only means for political engagement.

The issue of greatest political tension in the Kingdom at present – the conflict between the government and the IAF over professional associations – stems from the government's decision to ban professional associations from engaging in political activities after the IAF and professional associations organized demonstrations calling for a boycott of U.S.-made goods and protesting Jordan's 1994 treaty with Israel. In recent weeks, the tension has risen further with the government's introduction of a law governing the professional associations that would change the way its executive councils

are elected. According to the opposition, the new system would increase the power of tribal representatives on the association's governing bodies and dilute the influence of the professional associations' largely urban (i.e. Palestinian origin) membership of 140,000. In an unprecedented action, IAF and professional association members launched sit-in demonstrations at association branches throughout the country and took out full-page ads in the three biggest dailies criticizing the new law and asking that the Lower House of Parliament reject it.

For his part, King Abdullah must balance his desire to push political reform with the need to preserve the status quo for his traditional base of power among the East Bank elite. If the cause of reform is pushed too aggressively, King Abdullah risks alienating power-brokers in the Transjordanian community, which fears the full enfranchisement of Palestinian rights.

Despite these challenges, IRI strongly believes that opportunities to broaden the democratic debate in Jordan exist, and that well-reasoned initiatives to increase citizen participation, promote good governance, and support multiparty competition can be introduced. Given the political framework, IRI assistance to support political reform and democratization in Jordan is being pursued with particular sensitivity to the realities on the ground.

### **III. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES**

In this quarter, IRI-Jordan Country Director Paul McCarthy hired two local staff, Amani Muqbel, who previously directed a women's advocacy program at the Queen Zein Al-Sharaf Institute for Development (ZENID), as Project Coordinator, and Sawsan Shasha'a, previously an administrative assistant at ZENID, as Office Manager, concluding the logistical set-up of a permanent presence in Amman.

Prior to moving forward with programmatic activities, IRI staff at the beginning of the quarter completed a baseline internal assessment of local and international organizations engaged in political development and reform initiatives in Jordan. IRI conducted meetings with the following during the quarter:

- Danah Dajani, Director, Princess Basma Youth Resource Center (PBYRC)
- Talal Al-Gdah, Director, Sweileh Community Center
- Huda Hakki, Director, Development Information Unit (ZENID)
- Dalia Farouqi, Director, Research and Documentation, National Center for Human Rights
- Mustapha Hamarneh, Director, Center for Strategic Studies, University of Jordan
- Muhamed Kadhim, Team Leader, Poverty Alleviation through Municipal Development, German Technical Assistance (GTZ)
- Eman Nimri, Deputy Executive Director, Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development (JOHUD)

- Hassan Morahly, Assistant Director, Small Business Development Center, Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development (JOHUD)
- Nadia Bushnaq, Director, Family Guidance and Awareness Center, Zarqa
- Amal Farhan, Minister of Municipal Affairs
- Khaled Taraweh, Director, Regional Planning Department, Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (MOPIC)
- Widad Adas, Human Development Researcher, UNICEF
- Fares Braizat, Coordinator, Public Opinion Polling Unit, Center for Strategic Studies, University of Jordan
- Nuha Azraie, President, and Leila Hamarneh, Director, Mosawat Center, Arab Women's Organization of Jordan
- Ariuf Ajaleen, Director, Community Development Center (CDC) in Mlieh, Madaba Governorate, Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development (JOHUD)
- Ranah Hijayah, Mayor, Al-Hisa Municipality, Tafleh Governorate
- Tony Sabbagh, Director, Middle East Market Research Consultants
- Roula Attar, NDI

#### Political Party and Elected Official Assistance

In mid-February, IRI staff and political consultant Marc Nuttle conducted an assessment of political leaders and organizations at the national and local level in order to identify promising reform-minded leaders and to make contacts beyond prominent national politicians.

Meetings were conducted with the following:

#### Amman

- Musa Ma'aita, General Secretary, Democratic Leftist Party
- Marwan Faouri, General Secretary, Centrist Islamic Party
- Khaldoun Naser, General Secretary, Al-Ahed Party (Nationalist)
- Ahmed Yousef, General Secretary, Jordanian Democratic Public Union - Al-Hashed Party (Leftist)
- Ahmed Ashounaq, General Secretary, Constitutional Democratic Party (Nationalist)
- Ali Abu Sukar, MP, Islamic Action Front (IAF)
- Danah Dajani, Director, Princess Basma Youth Resource Center (PBYRC)
- Lina Quora, Sisterhood is Global International-Jordan (SIGI-Jordan)
- Hani Hourani, New Jordan Foundation
- Fares Braizat, Coordinator, Public Opinion Polling Unit, Center for Strategic Studies, University of Jordan
- Oraib Rantawi, Al-Quds Center for Political Research, Al Dustour newspaper

### Salt

- Sameh Al Majali, Governor
- Maher Abu Assamen, Mayor
- Amer Abdullat, Elected Member of Salt Municipal Council
- Iman Husseini, Appointed Member of Salt Municipal Council
- Representatives of local NGOs

### Zarqa

- Mohammed Arsalan, Parliamentary Deputy (Independent)
- Nadia Bushnaq, Family Awareness Resource Center, (three-time candidate for parliament)
- Mohammed Shmuli, Rifah Party (Centrist)

### Tafileh

- Wanes Harahsheh, Governor
- Redwan Madani, Mayor, Al-Tafileh Municipality
- Rana Hijayah, Mayor, Al-Hisa Municipality

### Irbid

- Nabil Al-Koufahi, former Mayor of Irbid, Islamic Action Front Leader

### Karak

- Youth Committee of Karak

In the course of the assessment, IRI met several mayors, governors, and municipal councilors in the municipalities of Salt, Zarqa, Tafileh, and Madaba. (Since the completion of the assessment, IRI staff has also met with municipal officials in Irbid). IRI has targeted each of these communities for assistance to improve two-way communication between local government and citizens by establishing a framework for cooperation and joint projects and to encourage citizen participation in helping set priorities for local councils. This municipal-level approach to combat public apathy in government and build confidence in elected and appointed officials forms the core of IRI's work in Jordan and will be developed in consultation with Jordan's Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, as well as with local and international organizations that have initiated municipal-level outreach.

### Mayors

The Mayor of Salt (Central Jordan) requested IRI assistance in training the staff of the municipality's public information office which deals directly with citizen complaints and requests. He also recently hosted the mayor of Varna, Bulgaria, and has requested

contacts with additional reform-minded mayors in Eastern Europe with whom IRI has worked in the past to exchange experiences on reforming local government. The mayors of Zarqa and Irbid have expressed interest in similar training.

### Women

In Al-Hisa municipality in the Tafileh Governorate (Southern Jordan), IRI-Jordan, in cooperation with the country's only female mayor, Ranah Hijaya, is assisting a new initiative dubbed "Tafileh Women Pioneers," to organize women leaders and provide a forum in which participants may share their experiences as "pioneers" in women's leadership and strategize on ways to encourage other women in the governorate to become more involved in community affairs.

To that end, IRI staff assisted Mayor Hijayah in organizing the group's inaugural meeting. The one-day brainstorming session held on March 5, at the local Community Development Center (CDC) of the Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development (JOHUD) brought together women from the poorest and most traditional governorate in Jordan. In addition to Mayor Hijayah and IRI-Jordan Country Director Paul McCarthy and Program Coordinator Amani Muqbel, participants included: directors of governorate departments (social development, planning), municipal officials, university professors, school directors, and local NGO leaders.

During the discussion, each woman described the support she received (from family members) and the obstacles they collectively face as women decision-makers in a male-dominated, traditional society which frowns upon any role for women outside the home. Also discussed were their efforts (some of which were more successful than others) in changing male relatives' and colleagues' perceptions of women in leadership positions. The participants agreed to form a working group which will meet regularly to formulate concrete projects to increase the role of women in decision-making. Mayor Hijayah suggested a first project for the Pioneers: a monthly newsletter that will focus on the success stories of women leaders in the governorate and serve as a forum for women to advocate for increased participation in local affairs.

The meeting was covered by both *Al-Rai*, the national Arabic daily, and Jordan TV. *Al-Rai* carried an article on the meeting the following day and gave a short description of IRI's program in Jordan.

At the suggestion of IRI staff, Mayor Hijayah will convene in the coming weeks a second, larger meeting which will bring together an expanded network of Tafileh Women Pioneers with the governor, mayor, and municipal councilors. The focus of the discussion will be ways to increase the role of women in the political life of the governorate. IRI has agreed to work with Mayor Hijayah on follow-up projects.

The conduct of such programs will assist IRI-Jordan in identifying women leaders at the municipal level who may run for elected office based on the experience they gain and the contacts they make conducting advocacy campaigns and working directly with local

government. With municipal elections now potentially taking place during the year, immediate attention to identifying and assisting viable women leaders is essential.

### Youth

IRI held consultations with the Princess Basma Youth Resource Center during the quarter in order to solidify a plan of action for future cooperation. These cooperative relationships lay the foundation for a youth-focused civic participation program targeting active youth committees in the communities of Sahab, Mafraq, and Karak. The program's activities will include:

- A one-day orientation workshop for 25 youth in each community designed to introduce participants to the project, assess community needs and priorities, and reiterate the importance of youth participation in community service. Following the workshops, a core group of 10 youth from each area will be selected to lead the second part of the program.
- A series of six four-day workshops for the core group of 30 youth (10 from each of the three target communities) will provide advanced capacity-building training resulting in the development of approximately three advocacy campaigns per community.
- A two-day forum will bring together youth and community leaders and decision-makers to discuss the proposed advocacy campaigns.
- Core groups will begin implementation of civic participation plans in each community.
- A localized, practical Guide to Step-by-Step Advocacy will be published in Arabic and distributed to all PBYRC partners, including youth and women's committees in Community Development Centers (CDCs) throughout the country, government organizations, and NGOs.
- A short film that may be used as a future guide and documents the advocacy campaign process and reiterates the importance of youth participation will be produced.

## **IV. RESULTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

**Objective:** To encourage more representative and competitive multiparty political systems.

**Result 1:** Established political parties and organizations will be reformed and nascent democratic political parties and organizations will be strengthened to make them more democratic, transparent, representative and effective.

*No results to date.*

**Result 2:** Democratic political participation will be expanded and competitive multiparty systems will be encouraged.

Elected municipal councilors in target cities have been contacted with an eye towards possible programming when municipal elections are eventually called.

IRI staff held numerous consultations with the country's only female mayor, Ranah Hijayah, of Al-Hisa municipality in the Tafileh governorate and assisted Mayor Hijayah in organizing and co-sponsoring meetings designed to bring together the expanding network of Tafileh Women Pioneers with the Governorate's governor, mayor, and municipal councilors to discuss ways to increase the role of women in the political life of the governorate

**Result 3:** Governance skills of political leaders and representatives in national and local level elected bodies will be increased through training and strengthening of parliamentary blocs or caucuses.

IRI staff held consultations with mayors, governors, and municipal councilors in the municipalities of Salt, Zarqa, Karak, Tafileh, and Irbid regarding training the staff of each municipality's public information office to more effectively respond to questions and complaints.

IRI staff held consultations with the Mayor of Salt regarding facilitating exchanges between local-level elected officials and reform-minded mayors in Eastern Europe with whom IRI has worked in the past.

## **V. FUTURE ACTIVITIES**

With a fully functioning office in place and well-established relationships with relevant government officials, IRI will be able to continue in the next quarter the implementation and expansion of programmatic activities.

In late April, at the request of the local women's committees connected with the Jordanian Hashemite fund for Human Development (JOHUD), IRI-Jordan will assist in organizing advocacy campaigns in their respective municipalities by: 1) facilitating contact between the committees and municipality officials, and 2) planning joint programs aimed at solving local problems. IRI staff has also scheduled meetings with the following organizations to discuss their plans to support women candidates when municipal elections are called: the National Women's Forum of Jordan; Arab Women's Organization; Mizan Law Center; and Sisterhood is Global International-Jordan (SIGI-Jordan).

Consultations with potential polling partners Tony Sabbagh of the Middle East Market Research Consultants and Professor Musa Shteivi, Director of the Jordan Center for Social Research, will be held in mid-April. IRI anticipates being able to initiate survey research aspects of its program in the coming quarter.



In addition, IRI will continue its consultations with previous IRI partners – namely the Princess Basma Youth Resource Center (PBYRC) – in order to solidify a plan of action for future youth advocacy programs. These cooperative relationships lay the foundation for youth-focused civic participation programs.